

Museveni launches medics' SACCOS

KITGUM

By Wokorach-Oboi

President Yoweri Museveni has contributed sh1b towards the newly established nurses and midwives' Savings and Credit Co-operative Society (SACCOS). He promised to fulfil the pledge in July.

Museveni made the pledge while launching the Uganda Nurses and Midwives Union SACCOS on the International Nurses Day at Boma grounds in Kitgum municipality on Saturday.

The day is celebrated worldwide in remembrance of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing.

On the clamour for a salary increment, Museveni said the Government would eventually increase salaries of health workers, but urged them to be patient as the Government injects money into other crucial developmental activities.

He equated the debate of salaries versus infrastructure to children in a home demanding a car, yet the parents prioritise family land over the children's needs.

The President said citizens are now able to travel on tarmac roads from all corners of the country, up to Kitgum.

He said the ongoing tarmacking of the Olwiyo-Gulu-

Acholibur-Kitgum-Musingo road cost the Government sh700b, money which the Government did not borrow from donors, but was from its own fund.

He said the public service ministry would soon announce the new salary rates and urged nurses and midwives to be patient.

"I have put my foot down that government scientists must get an increment before anybody else, for now. We shall start with government doctors and nurses, then other scientists, such as engineers, veterinarians and teachers of science subjects in schools will follow," Museveni said.

He added that the Government would continue to increase the salaries of all civil servants "because we want the doctors, nurses and civil servants to get what others are getting in the region or even better".

The President said his government was also focused on providing good housing and medical equipment to improve the health workers' working conditions.

Responding to the union's president, Justus Cherop Kiplangat's earlier request that the President also considers giving scholarships to nurses and midwives, Museveni promised scholarships to 18 nurses drawn from the original

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- On salary increment, Museveni said the Government would eventually increase salaries of health workers, but urged them to be patient.
- The President said his government was focused on providing good housing and medical equipment to improve the working conditions of medics.
- He pledged to support 18 nurses, nominated by the nurses and midwives national union.

HIGHLIGHTS

18 districts created shortly after independence.

"I will support 18 nurses, nominated by your national union," Museveni said, amidst applause and ululation from the medical workers.



Museveni and Anywar (left) in Kitgum on Saturday

He said nurses are a crucial link in the healthcare industry.

"It is like in the army where you have an officer who cannot do his work in the absence of a non-commissioned officer or sergeant. The officer plans, but a non-commissioned officer or sergeant implements the plan," Museveni said.

"You are lucky you are in an area very much needed by human beings. And the demand for nurses in the world is growing. It will never go down. Other people can qualify in social work and development studies, but they cannot get jobs, but you are sure to get a job either here or outside, if we train you well. So, I am here to assure you that you are in the right place at the right time," the President said.

The union also asked the Government to come up with a risk and compensation policy, saying whenever nurses and midwives fall sick or get problems in the course of their service, the Government does not respond to their cries.

Museveni was, however, surprised by the demand, saying the nurses, as do all other civil servants, "all get compensated if they get into problems on duty. Unless, of course, losing a tooth in a bar, that's a different matter".

The union president also requested the President to regulate "abominable school fees" that nursing students were paying. Kiplangat said students pay sh2m for each of the five semesters, yet when they get employed, they earn a meagre salary.

"We are requesting that you regulate the abominable school fees in nursing schools because nurses and midwives earn only sh460,000, yet they pay close to sh10m for the entire course," he said.

In his response, the President promised to look into the fees structure of government nursing schools and with a view of lifting the heavy burden off the shoulders of parents.

The Kitgum Municipality Member of Parliament, Beatrice Atim Anywar, asked the President to elevate Kitgum Hospital to a regional referral hospital since it serves the four east Acholi districts and South Sudan nationals, including refugees living in Lamwo district.

President vows to fire district leaders over poor service delivery